

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY -THE HIDDEN FORCES BEHIND A CHILD'S HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses role of family and community in a child's holistic development. Family and community can be considered as a back bone of child's overall development. They provide the protection, support and care which support in physical and emotional development of the child. Childhood is a crucial stage where children learn not just academic basics but also essential social and emotional skills that shape their character, resilience and self confidence. A community focused environment empowers children to express themselves, make friends and experience a sense of security that enhances their learning experiences. But it is observed that emotional health of the school going children is alarmingly depressing. Nearly 12.5% of the school going children aged 5-15 are affected by depression, anxiety and behavioural disorders. Issues like emotional problems up to 32%, poor social behaviour up to 26% and conduct problems up to 23% was found among children. Factors like urban living, family social issues, parental conflicts etc lead to emotional disorganization. Studies have always pointed out to key role played by community in shaping a child's constructive development. The challenges of nuclear family, divided community objectives, bi polar social decadence needs to be addressed through strong policy interventions.

Key words: child's holistic development, role of Family & community, challenges

INTRODUCTION:

Family and Communities play an important role in child's initial and holistic development. The children grow and develop trusting and caring relationships with the support of the family and the community involvement. Children grow emotionally, intellectually and physically through their relationships with community and family support. Communities support children in home, schools, and neighbourhoods and across regions. Research observations clearly point out that the children who grow up in close knit communities tend to exhibit higher social, emotional skills resilience and adaptability than others. These children value collaboration, empathy and kindness qualities for rest of their life. But there are several challenges in providing full support of the family and community during children's growth.

Impact on mental health- Studies have shown that children who suffer from poor family relationships and conflicting family background develop vindictiveness and aggressiveness. Besides, following problems can hinder a child's growth.

1. **Anxiety** - anxiety can hinder a child's ability to interact confidently with peers and participate in groups activities.
2. **Attachment problems**-Difficulties in forming secure attachments may affect a child's ability to trust and engage socially.
3. **Attention deficit hyper activity syndrome**- ADHD can affect a child's impulse control and attention span making interactions more challenging.

4. **Autism**- children with autism may struggle with social communication and understanding social cues impacting their interactions.
5. **Aggravation** - past trauma can lead to emotional and behavioural issues that disrupt social interactions and emotional regulations.

Benefits Of community in child's development- Communities have shown constructive impact on growth of a healthy child.

1. **Community fosters co-operative living** Learning and development are continuous throughout life and especially in young children. Development of young children takes place in different atmospheres such as home, community, village, region etc. where they are surrounded by their parents , grandparents , relatives and other family members. Communities support children in fostering cooperative living.
2. **Parental involvement-** Parental involvement helps the community members to understand that a child deserves to live in a healthy and happy family environment. Bonding between teacher and parents is critical in strengthening the school and community environment which ultimately enables teachers and parents to encourage their children's educational process.
3. **Family and community** – family and community have great influence in child's emotional development. A child grown in a healthy community understands the value of empathy and togetherness. Community supports children to value the role of elders, they learn to heed to the advise of the elders in the family , they also understand the significance of experience of the elderly people.
4. **Development of cognitive skills-** Cognitive development through interactive activities, playful explorations and guided instructions makes children enhance their language, pronunciation, thinking capabilities, problem solving and critical thinking skills. These skills help in valuing grandparents, elders, disabled people , unsupported people and diseased people . The children stand as pillars of support for these people be extending their helping hands in times of need and deed.
5. **Socio- emotional development-** Through interactions with peers community members and teachers , children learn essential social skills such as sharing , caring and involving. Family and community help him to incorporate activities that promote emotional regulation and self control helping children manage their emotions constructively. Early child hood settings often contain numerous physical and environmental hazards which can lead to increased stress and fatigue . The Community needs to monitor these changes constantly and ensure safety of the children. Early identification and intervention can support children in overcoming these obstacles and developing strong socio- emotional skills.
6. **A caring community will be created-** Establishing a supportive learning environment by fostering constant positive relationships among teachers children and families A caring community enhances children's emotional and cognitive development ensuring all that all members contribute to each other's wellbeing and learning.Conducting assessments that are aligned with the curriculum and program goals using assessments to monitor progress and adapt teaching strategies to meet each child's developmental and educational needs considering cultural and linguistic contexts.Community involvement will support in establishing reciprocal relationships with families-It supports in building strong partnerships with families to gain insights into each child's background and social needs A strong

community can broaden family involvement to school days parents teacher meetings and such scheduled activities instead it can support in fostering ongoing reciprocal relationships that recognize and incorporate parents knowledge and perspectives.

Policy interventions- Researching about building a healthy family environment and supportive community, Government of India has made several policies . The child mental health policies are guided by

1. **The National early childhood Care and Education Policy of 2013-** The National Early Childhood Care and Education Policy recognises that young children are best cared for in their family environment and thus strengthening family capabilities to care for and protect the child will receive the highest priority.
2. **National mental health policy 2014** - This aims to emphasise right based approach and universal access to mental health care.
3. **National youth policy 2014** – aims at holistic development young children integrating curriculum based approaches to securing right mental health at right time.
4. **National Mental health care Act 2017**-This act establishes right to accessible affordable and quality mental healthcare for all .It includes provisions for children's rights and dignity mandating approximate care without any discrimination.
5. **National education policy 2020** – aims to integrate mental health into curricular programs.
6. **Support Advocacy & Mental Health Interventions for Children In Vulnerable Circumstances & distress SAMVAD 2020-** this policy is a national initiative from the Ministry Of Women And Child Welfare that focuses on children in vulnerable circumstances and supports them by providing mental health support advocacy and psychological care support.
7. **Tele Mental Health Assistance & Networking Across States- TELE MANAS** – This is a national program which uses digital technology to improve access to mental health care services across India.
8. **Rastriya Kishore Swasthya Karyakarm RKS 2014** – this National plan focuses on mental and physical wellness of adolescents. It focuses on preventing case son anxiety and depression among teens.
9. **National Health Program 2014** - This policy focuses on health and wellbeing of adolescents including focus on mental health.

CHALLENGES

1. **Ignoring child's Mental health issues** - Mental health issues among children are frequently left unidentified and untreated. Parents also neglect them as they think it is normal part of growing up from child hood to adolescence. As treatment gap widens it becomes a distressing cause for their future mental growth. Sometimes family's poor help seeking behaviour compounded by traditional stigma and poor awareness add aggravates the child's mental health. A 2019 study estimated that 50 million children in India are affected by mental health issues. The national mental health survey found that 7.3% prevalence o mental disorders among children aged 13-17 and prevalence of 23.2% mental health issue s in school children. In urban areas it was 23.3% while in rural areas it was around 5%. Studies have

shown that high rate of anxiety and depression among children in India. A study reported that nearly 30 % of the school going children 5-17 years suffered from anxiety and depression. Issues like emotional problems up to 32% , poor social behaviour up to 26% and conduct problems up to 23% among children was found.

2. **Academic pressure-** Emotional and physical health of children are very important because issues like anxiety, depression , behavioural disorders are becoming common among children. Factors such as academic pressure , social media influence , technology over use and poor awareness about emotional health are aggravating the situation.
3. **Ever increasing rise in nuclear families-** Driven by urbanization and economic changes number of nuclear families rose from 37% in 2008 to 51 % in 2022 comprising half of households in India. Southern states show nearly 69% in the prevalence of nuclear families. This number is escalating each year. Economic compulsions, urban migration and education are driving the families to shift to urban centres where they are adding nuclear families.

But the need of the hour is

1. Policies aiming to integrate mental health services into broader health education and social welfare programmes are needed
2. Focusing on rights based approach ensuring cognitive development of the child making mental health accessible is needed
3. Addressing the social discrimination poverty and social stigma is also needed
4. Leveraging digital platforms to improve in early identification of the issues in the community is needed.

CONCLUSION:

This role of family and community in child's development is very imperative. But increasing number of mental health issues among school going children is of great concern. Government of India has come up with several schemes and policies to create a healthy community but policies focusing on early identification and intervention can support children in overcoming the emotional and psychological obstacles . Early addressing of these issues can support in developing strong socio-emotional skills.

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